

THE BLESSED ANGELS

A MONOGRAPH

BY MANLY P. HALL

THE BLESSED ANGELS

The Reality of Things Unseen

By

MANLY P. HALL



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THE BLESSED ANGELS THE REALITY OF THINGS UNSEEN

INTRODUCTION

Early Christian concepts of cosmology were based upon the universal scheme formulated by Claudius Ptolemy, an Egyptian astronomer who flourished in the second century A.D. He was probably indebted to Persian astrotheology, Pythagorean mathematical philosophy, and Jewish metaphysics for the system which he developed. He placed the earth in the center of the solar system because so far as humanity is concerned all cosmic forces converge upon the globe inhabited by mankind.

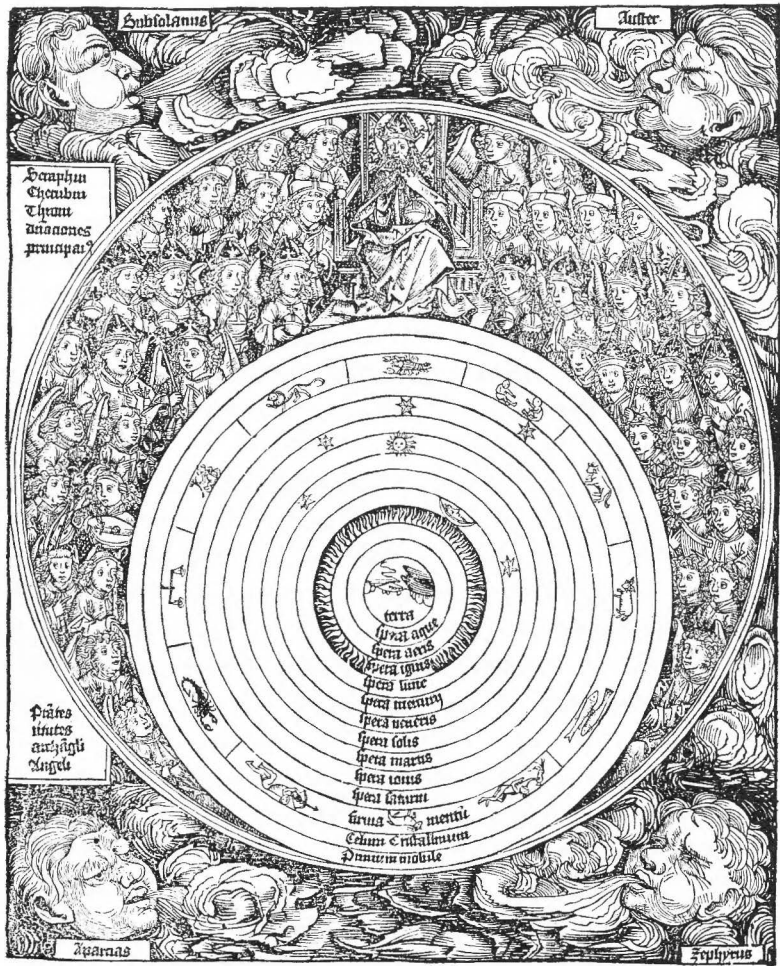
The geocentric or Ptolemaic concept dominated astronomy to the times of Galileo, Copernicus, Brahe, and Kepler. The researches of these astronomer-mathematicians resulted in the establishment of heliocentric astronomy. Even though they discovered that the planets—including the earth—revolved around the sun, these savants also practiced astrology and cast their horoscopes according to the old geocentric system. Most modern as-

trologers follow their example. There is evidence that Pythagoras was aware that the gods of the planets drove their chariots around the flaming altar of the sun, but his thoughts on the subject received little attention for over two thousand years.

Modern astronomy deals with the anatomy and physiology of the universe, whereas the Ptolemaic system was psychological and in a sense theological. It sought to organize the invisible processes which maintained physical existence. That wonderful old book *Nuremberg Chronicle*, published in 1493, contains hundreds of wood engravings. Among these is a full-page illustration depicting the Ptolemaic system of astronomy. It is divided into three sections. Deity is enthroned and bears the orb of the world. He is attended by a retinue of spiritual beings who adore him and become the ministers of his will. He is seated above and beyond the zodiac as the *Primum Mobile*—the first motion by which all other things are moved.

The two circles outside the zodiac are referred to in Genesis as the regions above the firmament. These constitute the imperium, and from these descend the heavens of the fixed stars, most especially the zodiacal constellations which enclose the orbits of the seven sacred planets known to the ancients. Below and within these are the regions of the material elements—fire, air, water, and earth.

To the viewer's left the nine hierarchies are listed in descending order. At the corners are representations of the four winds. The complete picture symbolizes the regions of spirit or the zodiacal hierarchy, regions of the soul or the planetary system, and the regions of body



The Ptolemaic system of astronomy. From the 1493 edition of the Nuremberg Chronicle.

which is the receptacle of the superphysical energies. This engraving is based upon the initiation rites of esoteric orders and was derived from a still older pattern taught in the Mystery Schools. It was further assumed that this invisible government established the pattern for all temporal rulerships.

Timur Shah, better known as Tamerlane, was born about 1336 and died in 1405. He developed a system of government based almost entirely upon geocentric astronomy and astrology. He divided his domains according to the zodiac, created a privy council analogous to the planets, placed himself under the rules of cosmic order, and imposed the system upon the countries and regions over which he had authority.

All physical things are manifestations of spiritual principles. These are invisible but all-powerful and the kingdoms of the earth are all subservient to the kingdom of heaven. Paracelsus declared that man is a threefold creature deriving his spirit from the stars, his soul from the planets, and his body from the realm of physical matter.

The astronomy of the Bible is geocentric. If we acknowledge a divine authority beyond our own, it is obvious that the hierarchies of blessed beings become necessary to the government of the cosmos. The classification of sidereal administrators of the Divine Will resulted largely from the labors of two mysterious persons—the prophet Enoch and Dionysius the Areopagite. Working from the trestle-board provided by Claudius Ptolemy, they systematized space, populating it with real but invisible creatures. From their labors and various interpretations thereon, the angelology of St. Thomas Aquinas was founded. Religion has always had its mys-

teries. It must be approached by faith, but there is something to inspire confidence in the idea that order prevails and that the Creator has ample resources with which to administer his creation. Astrology as we know it today, if theologized, would sustain the doctrine of the blessed angels and the concept that stars and planets are emissaries of the cosmic order.

THE BLESSED ANGELS

References to angels occur throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Only three are actually named in the sacred canon—the archangels Michael, Raphael, and Gabriel. A fourth archangel, Uriel, is named in the apocryphal Second Book of Esdras and the Book of Enoch. Those interested in pursuing this subject further can make use of the concordances which are appended to most English editions of the King James Bible. It is worth noting that none of the standard reference books, including the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (edited by James Hastings) and *A Religious Encyclopaedia* (edited by Philip Schaff, D.D., L.L.D.) assume these mysterious beings to be figments of the imagination. No judgment is passed concerning the reality of angels, and they are accepted by all these sources as belonging to religious beliefs which have been venerated for ages.

The Bible indicates that angels are capable of taking on a physical appearance and functioning in the material world. This is certainly implied in the account of Jacob wrestling with the angel. In other cases the descriptions suggest that angels appear in visions, dreams, or mystical experiences. In pre-Christian art winged figures also occur as in the designs which adorn Etruscan vases. In Roman times the guardian spirits of communities and illustrious persons were winged and resemble very closely the angels of Christian art. Although angelolatry, or veneration for angels, did not arise in Western Christianity until the fourth century A.D., it rapidly gained favor—especially with artists depicting sacred scenes. Illuminated Christian writings were soon embellished with angelic figures. The *Book of Kells*, now in the Dublin Museum, dates from the seventh or early eighth century and is a Latin transcript of the Four Gospels based upon the Vulgate Version. The extraordinary ornamentations of this manuscript include quaint depictions of angels and the symbols of the Evangelists. The four great archangels are included and Uriel is among them. In the symbolism of the Evangelists Mark is represented by the lion, Luke by the ox, and John by the eagle—all shown with wings. Matthew is in his approved natural form but is also portrayed winged. Angels and archangels are found in many early Irish-Christian remains and monuments.

The belief in angels found many supporters and interpreters among respected scholars of the Church. The writings on this subject attributed to Dionysius of the Areopagus formed the bridge between Neoplatonism and the scholastic philosophers. The writings of Dionysius were popular in the Eastern Church for several centuries

before they were translated into Latin by Johannes Scotus Erigena in the ninth century. In his reprint of Dr. Everard's translation of *The Mystical Divinity*, the Reverend John Parker includes a foreword entitled "Relating to Dionysius." This is unsigned, but contains some useful information including the following: "Many other translations followed together with innumerable Commentaries by the most eminent thinkers of the time, among whom were such as Hugo of St. Victor, Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, and Dionysius the Carthusian. 'Bonaventura is saturated with their influence and so are also the great German mystics Eckhart and Tauler.'" Parker also notes that after the Reformation the mystical ideals of Dionysius of the Areopagus influenced a succession of Protestant mystics including Jacob Boehme (See *The Mystical Divinity*, translated by Dr. John Everard, with remarks by Reverend John Parker, Philadelphia: 1926).

According to *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* the sect of the Essenes had an independent angelology, the secrets and mysteries of which were entrusted only to the initiated. Members of the sect were required under oath never to disclose the secret teachings of the community. The same source further notes that the arcana of the Essene Order very possibly had doctrines about the Messiah or the angels, and some of these teachings may have found their way into apocalyptic literature. *The National Geographic* of December 1958 says that about 100 B.C. the Essenes took refuge in a religious center at Wadi Qumran in the Judean wilderness. This they abandoned in 68 B.C. and concealed their libraries in caves to which they never returned.

In Judaism the hierarchy of angels, often called the 'host of heaven' or the 'company of divine beings,' is not strictly defined. Seven angels sometimes called archangels lead the heavenly hosts. These are set forth in the noncanonical First Book of Enoch, chapter 20, as Uriel (leader of the heavenly hosts); Raphael (guardian of the human spirits); Raguel (avenger of God); Michael (guardian of Israel); Sariel (avenger of the spirits); Gabriel (ruler of Paradise, the seraphim, and the cherubim); and Remiel, also called Jeremiel (guardian of souls in the afterlife). In Islam four archangels are recognized. Jibril, or Gabriel (the revealer); Mikal, or Michael (the provider); Izrail (the angel of death); and Israfil (the angel of the Last Judgment) (See *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edition). Different arrangements occur in other writings.

It must be understood that the doctrine of angels passed through a series of recensions by which it gradually became more complex. The Christianizing of the beliefs expressed in the Old Testament resulted in considerable confusion. Various lists of archangels are not always consistent. Names appear often without appropriate interpretations. With the rise of the cabala strange names were bestowed upon a multitude of sidereal spirits, both good and evil; and demonology provided long lists of subversive spirits, each with a strange and unfamiliar name. Cabalism interested a number of prominent Christian intellectuals, among them Knorr von Rosenroth to whom we are indebted for the first Latin translation of the Zohar. The belief in angels also found its way into the fairy tales of Hans Christian Andersen and the Brothers Grimm. The guardian angel now takes the

appearance of the fairy godmother who brings miraculous powers to the rescue of mortals in distress. The star-tipped wand of the good fairy is reminiscent of the magic scepters carried by the archangels. Several modern mystical sects offer prayers to these invisible beings convinced that their supplications will be heard.

The belief in angelic beings was held by many ancient peoples; each culture group developed its own explanations and interpretations of these mysterious creatures. They are also prominent in the scriptural writings of the Zoroastrians and in Persian art. Figures of angels and archangels are numerous in Christian art after the fourth century A.D. Choirs of celestial beings attend representations of Deity, the Holy Trinity, and the Blessed Virgin. Pictures of this type are called *Glories*, and the various hierarchies are depicted in the order of their preeminence. Both the Eastern and Western Churches have venerated especially the archangels Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, elevating them to sainthood by canonization.

According to scriptural testimony both angels and archangels have appeared in human form with or without wings. They are androgynous creatures, and artists in depicting them have been required to call heavily upon inspiration or intuition. Some painters have been more successful than others, and perhaps Raphael has been the most inspired. These supernatural beings which Dante called "Birds of God" are shown as youthful, handsome persons with quiet and benign expressions, variously robed and garmented according to prevailing customs. Archangels may wear elegant vestments, elaborately embroidered and bejeweled. Each carries sym-

bolic attributes bearing witness to his station and mission. They are never represented as aged and, while they are not actually considered immortal, they endure as long as they are sustained by the will of God. The principal arch-angels have been named, but the angelic host is considered as a group. Among the angels a body of celestial musicians is recognized forming a heavenly chorus. Some are also shown playing upon terrestrial musical instruments including harps, violins, and trumpets.

In Christian art wings are an adornment and are not to be taken literally. These pinions are of various sizes, and artists have devoted much time and talent to this subject. They are almost invariably derived from the natural wings of birds and may be varicolored with the iridescence of peacock feathers and other rare plumage. Though sometimes depicted in flight, angels are more often represented standing or kneeling with their pinions folded.

The kingdom of heaven was regarded in early times as a magnificent court like that of an Oriental monarch. It was appropriate, in fact more or less necessary, that God should have a retinue suitable to his station. In contemplating the wonders of creation, it was unreasonable to assume that Deity could alone regulate the realms of existence. As the chief executive of the world, he must administer his domain through orders of living beings bound to him by eternal love. Mortal kings have their prime ministers and their privy councils, and these in turn delegate other officials to carry out the divine commands. The word *angel*, from the Greek *angelos*, means "messenger," and the angelic orders of life inhabit qualitative distances between divinity and humanity. Their equiva-

lents must exist in every solar system, and beings of inconceivable splendor preside over cosmic systems and galaxies. There is no doubt that this concept gave verisimilitude to the angelic hierarchies. Most religions and philosophies have directly or indirectly sanctioned the reality of orders of invisible life assisting in the management of universal law.

In the West, St. Gregory the Great, affirming the existence of nine orders of angels, follows the classification of Dionysius of the Areopagus. John of Damascus, also following Dionysius, attempts a definition stating that an angel is an intellectual substance which is always mobile and endowed with free will, is incorporeal, serves God, has received according to grace immortality in its nature, and the form and character of whose substance That alone who created it knows (See *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, "Demons and Spirits"). Peter Lombard (1100?-1160 or 1164) is recognized as the first systematic theologian of the Western Church. He also arranged the hierarchy according to the order given by the Areopagite.

Thomas Aquinas, the greatest of the scholastic fathers, devoted an entire tract to the angels in his *Summa*. He writes, "Angels are altogether incorporeal, not composed of matter and form; exceed corporeal beings in number just as they exceed them in perfection; differ in species since they differ in rank; and are incorruptible because they are immaterial. Angels can assume an aerial body but do not exercise the functions of life. Thus they do not eat *proprie*, as Christ did after His resurrection. Angels can be localized, but cannot be in more than one place at the same time. The substance of angels is not pure thought, because, in a created being, activity and sub-

stance are never identical. Similarly the *esse* of angels is not pure thought. They have no sensory cognition. Their cognition is objective—not, however, through determinations in the object, but through innate categories. The cognition of the higher angels is effected by simpler and fewer categories than is that of the lower. Angels by their natural powers have knowledge of God far greater than men can have, but imperfect in itself. . . . The angels were created in a state of natural, not supernatural, beatitude. Although they could love God as their Creator, they were incapable of the beatific vision except by Divine grace. They are capable of acquiring merit, whereby perfect beatitude is attained; subsequently to its attainment they are incapable of sin. Their beatitude being perfected, they are incapable of progress.”

ANGELS IN ART

In Christian art certain attributes came to be associated with angels and archangels, and these were elaborated and refined in later centuries. They were shown in human form and were traditionally of the masculine sex but were feminized in the works of many great artists. They were usually, though not always, shown as winged to emphasize their power to ascend or descend through the various levels of the space dimension. In Christian art they inherited these wings from pre-Christian sources. Angels are always represented fully clothed. Prior to the seventh century their robes were white and of a Grecian

style. Later their garments were colored red or blue, often magnificently ornamented. Angels and archangels have a nimbus about the head. This nimbus is usually gold and in the Eastern Church may be ornately decorated. Originally these superphysical beings wore no hair ornaments but, in more recent times, a chaplet, circlet, or coronet has been introduced. Gradually other attributes have been added and both angels and archangels may carry symbolic objects such as swords, lances, and sprays of flowers. Angels are usually shown barefoot, but the archangels are often provided with sandals.

The Protestant Reformation had very little effect upon the cult of angels. In the Anglican Church the angels as messengers of the Divine Will are fully recognized. In the course of time, however, congregations have shown very little interest in the subject. In the *Book of Common Prayer* the twenty-ninth of September is dedicated to St. Michael the Archangel, and by extension to all angelic beings.

Angelic beings frequently appear in Buddhist art. They are usually shown attending Buddhas or Bodhisattvas. In paradise scenes they float among clouds, scatter flowers, or fill the air with their music. The great fane of Horyuji, the outstanding example of sixth century Japanese religious architecture, was originally decorated with a series of mural paintings of Buddhist divinities. These exquisite works of art were nearly all destroyed by a disastrous fire in 1949. One of the few surviving paintings depicts a Buddhist angel. These radiant beings, often called *tennin*, are usually represented in motion. They do not have wings but their flowing garments stream from their bodies in graceful folds. The hair is arranged in a high



Flying Buddhist angels; from *A Study of Hiten or Flying Angels* by Toshio Nagahiro.

chignon and the head is coronetted. Dark tresses hang upon the shoulders, and it would appear that the imagery is based upon traditional likenesses of Kannon, the Bodhisattva of Compassion and Mercy. Lady Gordon states that in Buddhism angels are always feminine, whereas in the West they are traditionally masculine (See *World Healers*, pages 390-391).

There is a class of paintings referred to as *Raigo-Zu*, or vision scenes. In these the Buddha Amida floats through the air on luminous clouds to conduct the souls of true believers to the Pure Land. Amida is often accompanied by a glory of angels. There is a famous vision scene at Mt. Koya in which Buddha is attended by bodhisattvas and twenty-five radiant beings playing various musical instruments, singing the songs of paradise, or carrying sacred banners.

In the Phoenix Hall at Uji in Japan, Amida is accompanied by fifty-two Unchu Kuyo-Bosatsu represented as standing or seated upon clouds (See *Buddhism and Psychotherapy*, pages 74-75). In Buddhist woodcarvings angels are often included in the elaborately carved and gilded nimbuses placed directly behind the images. In a few instances these are shown as human-headed birds and carry musical instruments. Angels appear among the



A Siamese angel from an illuminated manuscript of the eighteenth century.

temple paintings of Korea and the sacred art of India. Siamese paintings of the life of Buddha often show him accompanied by guardian spirits from the unseen worlds. Angels accompanied Muhammad on his night journey to heaven and the angel Jibril (Gabriel) appeared to the Prophet in the cave on Mt. Hira to announce his ministry. It is obvious therefore that Asia recognized the reality of the blessed angels.

THE CELESTIAL HIERARCHIES

Although accounts of the intercessions of spiritual beings in human affairs are scattered throughout Holy Writ, it remained for the early Christian theologians to classify the various divisions and levels of the heavenly

host. The invisible powers by which Deity administers his creation were divided into three hierarchies which were further subdivided into nine choirs. The first hierarchy is the Councillors of God which are made up of the three choirs of the Seraphim, the Cherubim, and the Thrones; these remain in constant attendance upon Deity. The second hierarchy is the Governors, composed of the choirs of Dominations, Virtues, and Powers; these regulate the created universe. The third hierarchy is the Messengers of God which are divided into Principalities, Archangels, and Angels; these are principally concerned with the well-being of humanity.

In this arrangement of the celestial hierarchies according to Dionysius, only the lower choirs are technically members of the angelic orders. In the course of time the various levels of the divine hierarchies were not clearly distinguished, and they are all grouped together and referred to as members of the archangels or the angelic order. A tenth division is sometimes mentioned and consists of the human souls on three levels of spiritual development. These are listed as good souls, aspiring souls, and sanctified souls.

With the exception of the archangels, individual members of these hierarchies are not specifically named. Those belonging to the angelic order when pictured in religious art are usually shown in white robes and winged. Seven archangels are recognized as possessing special characteristics and clearly defined responsibilities.

In old religious art the Seraphim are often depicted as childlike faces only, usually with six small wings. A good example is shown in Perugino's painting *The Assumption of the Virgin*. The Cherubim resemble the Seraphim



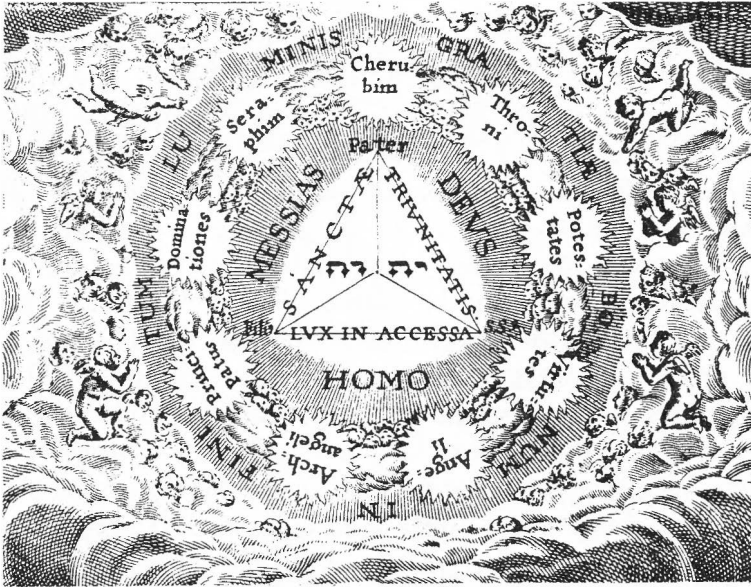
A six-winged seraph from the *Assumption of the Virgin* by Perugino.

except that they have only four wings. The cherubs on the Ark of the Covenant are often pictured with four faces, human bodies, and wings that meet over the Mercy Seat. The Thrones, Dominations, Powers, Virtues, and Principalities seldom appear in art and no actual likenesses are applied to them. Several of the Archangels are described in detail and are therefore well represented in sacred art. The Angels appear only in groups and, together with the Archangels, are specifically described as messengers communicating the Divine Will to mortals and coming to the assistance of worthy persons in distress. In Raphael's painting in the Vatican showing the release of St. Peter from prison, an angelic being comes to the aid of the great disciple—in one scene the angel is depicted as winged but in another scene is shown without wings and surrounded by a radiating aura of light. It is interesting to note that in hagiology the Archangels Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael have been canonized.

THE BLESSED ANGELS OF THOMAS HEYWOOD

The most important book dealing with this subject is *The Hierarchie of the Blessed Angells* by Thomas Heywood, London: 1635. The upper part of the title page is devoted to a symbolic representation of the angelic orders surrounding the triune nature of Deity. The volume itself is illustrated by engraved plates of the choirs of angels accompanied by important symbols. These are reproduced at the end of this article. This is a rare instance in which all of the nine orders of angels are actually pictured. The seraph in this series of plates is simply pictured as an angel, but it is of special interest that it is suspended between Jerusalem and Delphos, possibly to suggest the mingling of Jewish and Greek influence in angelolatry. The cherub has the traditional four wings and below is a scene showing the banishing of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. In the foreground are sages and scholars who have contributed to the doctrine of angels.

The design for the Thrones is obviously influenced by the Book of Revelation. The twenty-four elders are grouped about the eternal throne. The four creatures associated with the Evangelists are present. The lion, the bull, and the eagle are appropriately winged; but the fourth evangelist is shown as a seraph—in this case a face with wings. Below, the ark bears two cherubs as winged heads. The broken statue is called Dagon and is used to



The nine hierarchies; a detail from the title page of Heywood's *Hierarchie of the Blessed Angells*.

symbolize idolatry. The Dominations are symbolized by an angel carrying the cross and sword. Below, the nine hierarchies are arranged as a glory around the Agnus Dei.

In the engraving of the Virtues, the angelic being is flying toward the symbol of the Holy Spirit and is carrying emblems of the Passion. At the viewer's left is a group of cherubs and at the right the Grecian deities associated with the planets. At the bottom of the design the three religions which taught the mystery of the angels are represented. Moses stands for the Old Testament, the crucified Christ for the Christian dispensation, and the seated figure of Muhammad is intended to portray Islam.

He is accompanied by a small demon. The Powers are pictured by a valiant angel with the flaming sword of punishment in one hand and the heart of mercy in the other. At upper right is a hand holding the thunderbolt of Zeus. Below are the jaws of perdition with fallen angels and evil spirits cast out of the heavenly regions. It is implied that the Powers have sovereignty but act forever with justice tempered by mercy. The Principalities have authority over the governments of the world. The winged angel carrying a scepter of sovereignty is surrounded by symbols of temporal power. A good monarchy is shown in clouds at the viewer's left, and in the lower foreground the false kingdom that was set up in the abyss ruled by might rather than by right. Spiritual power is suggested by the church and temporal power by the walled city.

The Archangels are personalized in the form of St. Michael carrying symbols of Christendom. He is crowned with stars and stands on the prostrate body of the fallen angel from whose mouth proceed monstrosities and infernal creatures. The Angels picture forth the story that is told in Luke 2:9-11 when the angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds. In the lower foreground are the shepherds with their sheep; behind them a magician, standing in a magic circle, is conjuring up evil spirits, and these finally turn upon the sorcerer and destroy him. The Star of Bethlehem is above between the wings of the angel.

The order of blessed souls is not pictured in Heywood's work. It was recognized however as part of the heavenly hierarchy. When man was placed upon the earth he was given dominion over all the creatures which the Lord had fashioned. He had responsibilities to the animals, plants,

minerals, and all the elements of his planet. In order to ascend in godliness, he must serve these lesser forms of living things and be merciful according to the laws of heaven and nature; it is through loving kindness that human souls attain to their redemption.

THE BOOK OF ENOCH

No study of angels could be considered comprehensive without a discussion of the Book of Enoch. This work is of unknown origin and has been the subject of considerable theological controversy. Early Christian writers make frequent references to the mystical experiences of Enoch and, while the book is not canonical, it was evidently known by the author of the Epistle of Jude. In Jude, verses 14-15, we read, "And to these also Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his holy ones, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all the ungodly of all their works of ungodliness which they have ungodly wrought, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." There are two versions of the *Book of Enoch* of which one is called the Ethiopian and the other the Slavonic to indicate the regions in which the earliest manuscripts were found.

The Book of Enoch is a formidable work largely concerned with fallen angels, evil spirits, and relapsed

human beings. There is no doubt that it influenced the thinking of early Church Fathers who were warning heretics and nonconformists of the eternal horrors that awaited them beyond the grave. Christian art of the twelfth through eighteenth centuries developed many variations on the theme, especially in representations of the Last Judgment. The prophetic writings of Enoch resulted from a series of visions in which the prophet was lifted up to the higher realms where he was instructed by God and exalted spiritual beings. However there is not the overall splendor and mystical inspiration in the Book of Enoch as is set forth in the texts of Dionysius of the Areopagus. It cannot be doubted, however, that Enoch populated the airy distances with nations of good and evil spirits.

The Slavonic Version of Enoch was translated into English by W.R. Morfill, M.A., and published in 1896 at the Clarendon Press, Oxford, under the title *The Book of the Secrets of Enoch*. In his introduction to this work R. H. Charles writes, "The Slavonic Enoch in its present form was written somewhere about the beginning of the Christian era. Its author or final editor was an Hellenistic Jew, and the place of its composition was Egypt." In the same introduction Charles further states that in its surviving form it is reasonably certain that it originated in the first century A.D. probably in Alexandria. In the Slavonic Version the cosmological elements are expanded by Enoch for the enlightenment of his sons. The several visions are more extravagant than in the Ethiopian Version. There is considerable emphasis upon angels who guide Enoch through the invisible realms of the cosmos.

It is believed that the First Book of Enoch is associated with the Essene community at Qumran. Some sections probably go back to the second century B.C., and others were added as late as the second century A.D. In *The Book of the Secrets of Enoch* there is an additional account of Enoch's life and his final ascension to the heavenly region. Modern thinking ties this with Alexandrianism.

The seventh chapter of the First Book of Enoch (Richard Laurence translation) is of special interest to our present subject. "It happened after the sons of men had multiplied in those days, that daughters were born to them, elegant and beautiful. And when the angels, the sons of heaven, beheld them, they became enamoured of them, saying to each other, Come, let us select for ourselves wives from the progeny of men, and let us beget children."

DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE

The first reference to Dionysius the Areopagite is found in Acts 17:34, "But some men joined him, and believed: among them Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them." In *The Golden Legend of Jacobus de Voragine* (Volume II, page 617, Ryan-Ripperger translation, 1941 edition) it is stated that Dionysius was called the Areopagite because of the section of Athens where he had his dwelling. The Areopagus was the quarter of Mars and was the best section of

the city where nobles and scholars assembled. It may be remembered that the trial of Socrates was held in the Areopagus. Dr. John Everard in his introduction to *The Mystical Divinity of Dionysius, The Areopagite* writes, "Though we know nothing of the man who is called Dionysius, the Areopagite, except the few references he has made to himself and his contemporaries (and history cannot help us), he stands at the fountain head of Christian Mysticism: reflecting what was the best and noblest in the spiritual thought of the Old World Philosophy, re-expressed in the Light of Christ."

The works of Dionysius referred to in the writings of the early Church Fathers are first, *On the Heavenly Hierarchy*; second, *On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*; third, *On the Names of God*; and fourth, *On Mystic Theology*. In addition are ten letters which are generally accepted as authentic. The basic concepts set forth in these works provided the pattern necessary to the structuring of a systematic Christian philosophy.

After being converted by Paul, Dionysius with his wife Damaris and his whole household were baptized. *The Golden Legend* also states that this Dionysius was instructed for three years by St. Paul and that he was ordained Bishop of Athens. The account then continues, "It is said that Paul made known to him the things that he had seen when he was rapt to the third heaven, and this Dionysius himself seems to insinuate in several places. Hence he has written so aptly and clearly of the hierarchies of the angels, their orders, dispositions, and offices, that you would not think that he had learned this of another, but had himself been rapt to the third heaven, and had there viewed all these things."

τὰς ἐν ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ περὶ
τῆς οὐνίου ἐραρχίας·
κεφάλαια ιε·

Α ὅτι πασὰ θεία ἐμάμψα
κατὰ ἀγαθότητα ποι
κίλως εἰς τὰ προνοούμε
να προΐδουσα μένει ἁ
πλή· καὶ οὐτὸ οὐτομό
νον· ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν οὐ
· εἴτα ἐλαμπόμενα·

Β ὅτι προπόντων τὰ θεία
καὶ οὐρανία καὶ διὰ
τῶν ἀνομοίων συμ
βόλων ἐκφάνεται·
Γ τίς ἐστὶν ἡ ἐραρχία καὶ
τίς ἡ κατὰ ἐραρχίαν
ὁνείσις·

The works of St. Dionysius the Areopagite; from a Greek uncial manuscript of the ninth century in the Laurentian Library at Florence.

In the *Nag Hammadi Codices*, edited by Douglas M. Parrott, published in Leiden, 1979, there is a translation of the Apocalypse of Paul. One cannot read this without receiving the strong impression that it describes the initiation of the Apostle into a system of Christian Gnosticism. Paul was caught up to the third heaven and then passed to the fourth heaven where there were angels resembling God. He then ascended to the fifth heaven where there was a great angel holding an iron rod. He then went on to the sixth heaven from which he passed to the seventh heaven where he saw an old man seated upon a throne. From here he passed to the eighth heaven, then to the ninth, and finally to the tenth. Of the upper regions there is no description and the brief work ends with the words "The Apocalypse of Paul."

It has been stated that Dionysius was present at the death of the Blessed Mary. He also visited Rome and was later sent to France by Clement where he built a number of churches. He was burned afterwards as a martyr in 95 A.D. The life and career of Dionysius, however, would have slight interest for modern scholars had it not been for the small but important tract *On Mystic Theology* by Dionysius the Areopagite, which had come into circulation about the fifth century A.D. It has been widely assumed that this was written by an unknown author who has come to be termed the Pseudo-Areopagite. From the time of their first appearance the Dionysian writings profoundly influenced Christian mysticism. Even today the concepts which they set forth are held in the highest veneration by both Catholic and Protestant religionists. It seems to me that the books may be based upon an oral tradition that could go back to the first or second century

A.D. We know, for example, that the Coptic manuscripts found at Nag Hammadi belong to the fourth or early fifth centuries A.D. Evidence, however, points to these books being transcriptions of texts known two or three centuries earlier.

If the Dionysian books were associated with the Gnosis they could have been held in secret for a long time before being publicly circulated. One might suspect they were productions of the Alexandrian school which produced a considerable number of apocryphal works associated with both Old and New Testament writings. If such be the case, they belong to a class of early post-Christian literature, the authorship of which remains unknown to the present time. Dionysius the Areopagite is credited with having systematized earlier beliefs about the mysteries of the heavenly hosts and the hierarchies of angelic beings so frequently referred to by the great Church theologians.

St. Paul mentions several of these orders of celestial beings in the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians 1:16, "for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers." In the Douai-Reims English Version of the Bible, favored by Roman Catholics, in the Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians 1:20-21 there is a further reference to the hierarchies, "Which he wrought in Christ, raising him up from the dead, and setting him at his right hand in the heavenly places: Above all principality, and power, and virtue, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." In the King James Version the word *virtues* is omitted.

Robert Fludd, the Rosicrucian mystic, in his *Collectio Operum* lists the ten hierarchies in the following order descending from the highest group: Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominations, Powers, Virtues, Principalities, Archangels, and Angels. He includes humanity as the last of the hierarchies under the name "Souls." He also places the ten orders upon the ten branches of the sephirothic tree of the later cabalists. In his *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* Henry Cornelius Agrippa includes a number of tables of correspondences between the angelic hierarchies and the orders of spirits involved in ceremonial magic.

Professor Milton S. Terry in his book *The Sibylline Oracles* mentions a large body of pseudepigrapha which originated between 150 B.C. and 300 A.D. He includes the Book of Enoch and the Second Book of Esdras, and notes that the production of such works was most notable in Alexandria in the time of the Ptolemies. Mead believes, according to *The Chaldaean Oracles*, that they were "a product of Hellenistic (and more precisely Alexandrian) syncretism." He says, "The Alexandrian religio-philosophy proper was a blend of Orphic, Pythagorean, Platonic, and Stoic elements, and constituted the theology of the learned in the great city which had gradually, from the third century B.C., made herself the centre of Hellenic culture."

The magnificent libraries of Alexandria were a rich source of ancient religious and philosophical writings which were lost to the world when these great collections were destroyed. It is not necessary to assume that the various sacred texts which were first available to scholars were actually written by Alexandrian theologians. They

may have only translated or transcribed earlier works, giving credit to the original authors. This brings up certain doubts about the existence of the Pseudo-Areopagite. No information is available concerning him except that he must have lived about 500 A.D. Whoever he was, it is supposed that he falsely attributed writings of his own to Dionysius of the Areopagus. *A Religious Encyclopedia*, edited by Schaff, contains the following interesting quotation: "The non-authorship of Dionysius the Areopagite once agreed upon, the question arose, by whom, then, and at what time, these works were written; and a number of hypotheses were proffered, from that of Baumgarten-Crusius, placing the author at Alexandria, in the third century, to that of Westcott, placing him at Edessa, at the beginning of the sixth century." Actually there is no proof that the Pseudo-Areopagite actually existed. If Baumgarten-Crusius is correct the Dionysian writings must certainly be included among the productions of Alexandrianism. It is quite possible therefore that the mystical writings of Dionysius of the Areopagus could date back to the first century A.D. and are properly credited to their true source. In problems of this kind, modern opinions are not always dependable.

The great Alexandrian libraries were destroyed by Aurelian in 273 A.D. The Serapeum was completely razed in 388 A.D. upon the edict of Theodosius. As a result of these destructions, virtually all source material which might have vindicated the apocryphal writings was lost to the world. The fate of the religious books which were rejected by the Council of Nicaea, 325 A.D., also remains uncertain.

THE PLANETARY ARCHANGELS

There is lack of conformity in the tables of the planetary angels. The original concept inspired cabalistic speculations which resulted in the naming of hundreds of spirits, good and bad. For our purposes we will follow the classification of Robert Fludd as it appears in his *Collectio Operum*. Although Fludd wrote extensively on the cabala, he was basically an exponent of the Rosicrucian teachings of the early seventeenth century. He lists the planetary archangels as follows:

SATURN:	Zephkiel, the contemplation of God
JUPITER:	Zadkiel, the righteousness of God
MARS:	Samael, the severity of God
SUN:	Michael, like unto God
VENUS:	Hanael, the grace of God
MERCURY:	Raphael, the medicine of God
MOON:	Gabriel, the strength of God

In the Old Testament the Archangel Michael is the guardian of Israel, God's vice-regent, the heavenly high priest, and the keeper of the keys of heaven. In Christianity he is patron saint of the Church on earth and judge of the souls of the dead. As generalissimo of the armies of heaven, Michael was commissioned by the Lord to war against Lucifer and his rebel spirits. In Revelation 12:7-10

the chief of the rebellious spirits is called the dragon, but in *The Golden Legend* it is stated that this dragon was Lucifer. Michael is sometimes shown in Roman armor bearing a lance and carrying a balance or scales for the weighing of souls.

Raphael is regarded as the guardian of humanity and is the patron of the healing arts. Raphael was the archangel who brought to the shepherds the glad tidings of the birth of Christ. He is represented with a kindly and gentle expression and dressed as a pilgrim. His hair is bound with a fillet. He carries a staff and has a wallet hung on his belt. Raphael is often shown carrying a fish as a charm of medication (see Tobit 6:6). In 1921 Pope Benedict XV declared October 24 as Raphael's universal feast day. Since the sixteenth century St. Raphael has also been recognized as the patron of travelers.

The Archangel Gabriel is mentioned four times in the Bible, twice in Daniel and twice in Luke. He is believed to have foretold the birth of Samson. According to popular belief, he was the keeper of the celestial treasury. According to Luke, Gabriel announced the births of John the Baptist and Jesus. In early paintings of the Annunciation scene, Mary humbled herself before the angel, but after she became the Queen of Angels Gabriel kneels to her. In art this archangel is presented as a graceful being with a beautiful face and head and a flame-like curl of hair above the forehead. His attributes are a lily and a scroll inscribed with "Ave Maria Gratia Plena." He is sometimes shown with a scepter or an olive branch as a symbol of peace on earth. On January 12, 1951, Pope Pius XII declared Gabriel to be patron of those involved in electronic communication, television, telephone, and

telegraph, thus emphasizing Gabriel's function as a messenger.

Passing references to the other four archangels occur in Jewish religious legendry but are not carried over into Christian angelology. One other archangel, though not associated with the planetary septenary, should be mentioned. Uriel, the light or fire of God, is one of the four major archangels. He stands with Michael, Raphael, and Gabriel as a guardian of the throne of God. He is not mentioned in early Judaism but is named in the Second Book of Esdras and the Book of Enoch. He is said to be associated with natural phenomena—such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and thunderstorms. He also occurs in the Gnostic tradition.

In addition to these should be mentioned Metatron, one of the most important of all the archangels in Jewish myths and legends. He is assigned to the *Primum Mobile*, the first motion of the world. It is the motion of coming forth out of God and defines Deity as the unmoved mover of all things. Metatron is the celestial scribe and records the virtues and vices of human beings in the Book of Life. Also the Archangel Jophiel should be noted; he presides over the heavens of the fixed stars. He is enthroned above the firmament. He is guardian of the zodiac, the celestial wall enclosing the planetary system. He is also called "the beauty of God."

In the preface to his translation of Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos*, or *Four Books of the Influence of the Stars*, J.M. Ashmand notes that Ptolemy "became an illustrious disciple of the school of Alexandria, in which city he flourished during the reign of Adrian and that of Antoninus Pius." As Alexandria was the cradle of

Western mysticism, it is reasonable to assume that Ptolemy was acquainted with Neoplatonism, Gnosticism, and Egyptian philosophy. On the title page of his book, Ashmand notes that he has translated Ptolemy from the Greek paraphrase of Proclus who has been surnamed the Platonic Successor. Proclus was born in Constantinople about the year 410 A.D. He likewise studied at Alexandria and succeeded Syrianus as the head of the Platonic school at Athens. Among the most important of the literary labors of Proclus was the preparation of an extensive discussion of the theology of Plato. In this is set forth the order and enumeration of the gods and the elaborate symbolism of pre-Christian mysticism. It is almost inevitable that Proclus realized that the hierarchies as developed in early Christianity had their origin in earlier religious systems, including the Greek Mysteries. The universe of Ptolemy was accepted in large part by most of the Alexandrian schools including Christianity.

Although the astronomical system of Ptolemy is no longer scientifically accepted, he made many useful contributions to the knowledge of his times. He advanced the art of navigation, organized a working calendar, classified celestial phenomena, and made many useful observations bearing upon geography and agriculture. Having organized the anatomy and physiology of the universal structure, it was inevitable that his findings would be theologized. The systematizing of the physical cosmos brought into clearer focus the problem of the need for a sovereign intellect responsible for the splendor of existence—in other words, the world body must have a soul. On this point Lord Bacon says, "I had rather believed all the fables and the *Legend*, and the *Talmud*, and the

Alcoran, than that this universal Frame is without a Mind."

All living things are compounds of spirit and matter. Forms are moved by an indwelling life. If there is a science of matter there is also a science of spirit. The invisible structure must be understood before the purpose of life can be known. The mythologies of ancient nations were all concerned with the orders of superphysical powers which regulated physical affairs. Among the ancient Sabians the fixed stars were the eyes of spiritual beings, and the star angels assembled in glory around the throne of the Most High. To each of the signs of the zodiac was assigned a presiding genius, and these together regulated the seasons and the great cycles of time by which creation is measured.

The mortal sphere also had invisible inhabitants which are remembered in folklore as elementals, or nature spirits. The gnomes associated with the element of earth were the guardians of all the precious substances, metals, gems—and even coal, salt, and metallic ores. The water region was under the guardianship of undines, or nymphs, who had special administration over vegetation and creatures existing in the sea. The spirits of fire were called salamanders. They seldom appeared in any form other than tongues of flame and they had special authority over volcanoes, hot springs, and the use of fire in industry. The sylphs—often called fairies—were the denizens of the airy element. They guarded plant life, birds, and insects, and the pollination of plants. The elementals form part of the folklore of all nations and races. The ether, or luminous atmosphere, which constitutes



"When the Morning Stars Sang Together"; engraving from the *Book of Job* by William Blake.

the energy field of the planet was regarded as a direct manifestation of the planetary angels.

Thomas Taylor, in his notes to Volume I of *the Description of Greece* by Pausanias, deriving his information from the philosophies of Pythagoras and Plato writes, "There are three orders of souls which are the perpetual attendants of the gods. The first of these orders angels compose; the second, daemons; and the third, heroes. But as there is no vacuum either in incorporeal or corporeal natures, but on the contrary profound union, it is necessary, in order to accomplish this, that the last link of a superior order should coalesce with the summit of one proximately inferior. Hence therefore, between *essential* heroes, who perpetually attend the gods, and are consequently impassive and pure, and the bulk of human souls who descend with passivity and impurity, it is necessary there should be an order of human souls, who descend with impassivity and purity." Later Taylor adds (See Volume III, pages 229-230), "But as every god beginning from on high produces his proper series as far as to the last of things, and this series comprehends many essences different from each other, such as Angelical, Daemoniacal, Heroical, Nymphical, and the like, the lowest powers of these orders have a great communion and physical sympathy with the human race, and contribute to the perfection of all their natural operations, and particularly to their procreations." It should be understood that in Greek philosophy the word *daemon* signifies a supernatural being intermediate between gods and men and should not be confused with the modern concept of demon as an evil spirit.

From the above it is evident that classical Greek theology included the concept that invisible beings presided over the various orders of life unfolding in the mortal world. There were racial and national deities which overshadowed the major divisions of human society. Each city and state was under the protection of a patron divinity for whom temples and shrines were built and appropriate rites and ceremonies were conducted. Athens, for example, was not merely an aggregation of Athenians. It was a collective entity and it was held that this entity was Pallas Athena. It was her city and her energies were diffused throughout the population and all the institutions which she had inspired. As the human soul presides over the life of the individual, so Athena was the soul of Athens. This was not a poetic or symbolical belief but was held to be literally true. Athena inspired the philosophy, science, and art of her city and, when need arose, spoke through her priests and oracles and enlightened the minds of her scholars. Every race had its guardian angel within whose protecting care its cultures unfolded and its people fulfilled their appointed destiny. In astral theology, all divisions of life on this planet or elsewhere have their rulerships and the planets stand as symbols for their presiding divinities.

In his last discourse, Socrates declared it to be his belief that there were creatures living along the shores of the air as men live along the shores of the sea. To the old pagans there were countless spirits, most of them friendly, which mingled invisibly with mortals and occasionally communicated with them. There was no emptiness in space. Everywhere there was life—conscious and intelligent,

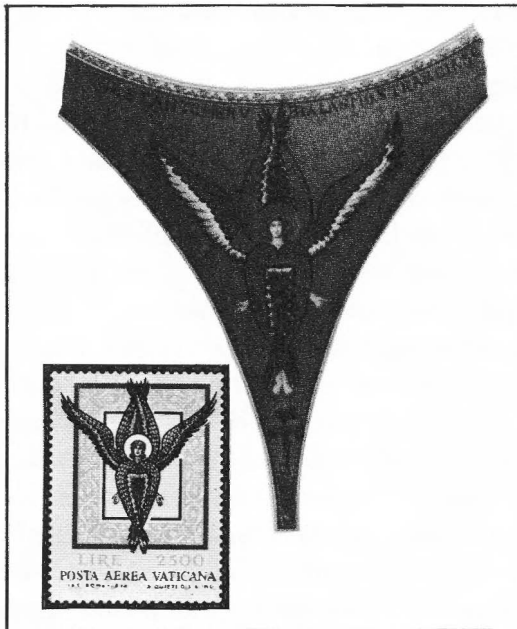
though unseen. It is generally accepted that the cult of angels originated in pre-Christian times and has gradually become involved in the beliefs of mankind regardless of sect or creed.

Materiality as a philosophy of life is a sterile delusion. All music originates in the song of angels, so a glory of angelic beings is shown in ancient art as choruses and symphonies of invisible spirits. Franz Schubert once said that he first heard his compositions in the air around him. The canonized saints of Christendom belong to that order of 'Heroes' described in the Platonic doctrine, and the Greeks addressed their prayers and supplications to deified mortals as intercessors between themselves and the Olympian gods. The earth was not a ball of dirt stumbling its way around the sun—it was a living being with a heart and a mind. It had its own nerves, arteries, and veins and lovingly provided for the well-being of its children. It could be appropriately honored as Isis, the Mother of Mysteries, and Diana, the great goddess of the Ephesians. This belief also explained to pagan minds how the prayers of private citizens could be heard and answered if the heart was pure and the plea was honorable.

No matter how intelligent or gifted the human being may become, he cannot cope with the total mystery of his own existence, and it has been assumed that a guardian angel attended him from the cradle to the grave. In his work *On the Mysteries*, Iamblichus devotes considerable space to natal guardian spirits who, like invisible parents, direct the unfoldment of character and the release of soul powers. Those beings most intimately involved in human concerns and their mutual relationships are of the order

of protecting angels. It was believed that when a body dies the guardian angel departs. Socrates notes that shortly before his death his protecting spirit bade him farewell. Death itself, however, is an essential part of life and those departing from mortality pass into the custody of the Angel of Death. This is not a monstrous shadow, but a faithful servant of the Universal Plan.

All the hierarchies are manifestations of divine love and mercy. Among those profoundly influenced by the mystical theology of Dionysius the Areopagite was St. Francis of Assisi (1182-1226). Two years before his death St. Francis received a vision of a seraph, and this



A seraph from a mosaic in the Cathedral Church of St. Mark in Venice, with an airmail postage stamp issued by the Vatican City in 1974 based upon this mosaic.

was followed almost immediately by the appearance on his body of the stigmata, or the five wounds of Christ. In his mystical raptures St. Francis experienced the unity of living things. In one of his poems he called upon Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Brother Wind, and Sister Water. He even referred to his own body as Brother Beast whom he had ill treated. When it became necessary for his physician to cauterize him with a red hot iron, St. Francis besought Brother Fire to deal kindly with him. He preached to the birds, and the ritual of blessing animals is a tribute to his memory.

Jacob Boehme (1575-1624), the Protestant mystic, while in prayerful meditation passed through a series of remarkable mystical experiences. It seemed to him that the physical atmosphere which surrounded him was actually opaque, but with the eye of his soul he was able to clear away the material mist and behold the splendors of the superphysical realms. He was in the midst of a living light which flowed and moved in patterns of celestial colors. Space was filled with spirits administering the physical phenomena of the universe. He could endure such visions for only a short time and allowed the veil to close, but the memory of what he had seen remained with him; these glimpses of reality were incorporated in his philosophy and sustained him through long years of adversity. There is an old engraving of Boehme which reveals, so far as is possible, the wonders of the divine order which sustains existence. The upper section symbolizes the unbearable radiance flowing from the nature of Deity. The Seraphim and the Cherubim adore their Creator, and the Four Evangelists attend the majesty of Deity.

It must be understood in all aspects of angelology that the forms in which these beings are generally represented are artistic contrivances. The actual bodies of angels or archangels are fields of light from which they are able to project temporary appearances. They belong in dimensions of existence beyond the sensory perceptions of the human being, but he must embody them with forms created in his own mind if he wishes to have awareness of their presence.

Each order of animals, vegetables, and minerals has its guardian angel. This has seemed to be the only explanation for the wonderful guidance everywhere obvious in the processes of existence, growth, and propagation. The heavenly kingdom includes them in its wisdom and compassion. Each form of life which has not yet been individualized has a group spirit guarding and guiding its destiny. The hierarchy of souls, the next division below the angels, is humanity which was given dominion over all the creatures of the earth. The angelic beings that direct the inner growth of the various species depend upon mankind to guard the physical rights of the various kingdoms and their subdivisions. In the mineral kingdom, the stones and metals, gems and elements, all have their rights and privileges.

Any abuse of natural resources is a misdemeanor carrying a heavy penalty. Plants have their guardian angels and all forms of vegetation live in obedience to the laws of their Creator. Each species of animals is ensouled by a guardian spirit which regulates their conduct for they too are citizens of the cosmic commonwealth. In his description previously quoted, Thomas Taylor assigns the ensouling of rivers, mountains, glens, and gardens to

the nymphs who inhabit the invisible etheric bodies of plants and minerals. Everything beneath God is in constant need of divine help. In Genesis God gave Adam dominion over all the kingdoms of nature. Man was to be the protector of life, and when he fails to be a good and faithful servant of the Divine Plan he brings disaster upon himself.

Many will probably feel that the cult of angels is incompatible with the progress of modern science. So long as science has no satisfactory explanation for the intelligence everywhere present in the natural world, it actually has no valid hypothesis with which to refute the Greek belief in hierarchies of ministering spirits regulating cosmic affairs. A genuine vision by which a devout person becomes aware of a superphysical presence cannot be discredited simply because the majority of human beings has not had such experiences.

The Seraphim :



The Cherubim



The Throne .



The Dominations.



W.M. Scul.

: THE VERTVES :





THE PRINCIPAT



S. MICHAEL ARCHANGEL



THE ANGELL

